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The facts, not follies, about another extremist week in Raleigh

This week’s follies aren’t really follies at all, just a *partial* list of what happened in yet another extremist week at the General Assembly.

The House voted to cripple the state’s air toxics program that protects North Carolinians from chemicals spewed into the air that physicians say cause serious health problems for seniors, pregnant women, and children.

The Senate Finance Committee passed legislation to make it easier for multi-state corporations to hide their profits from the Department of Revenue so they won’t have to pay the taxes they owe the state, the taxes that North Carolina-based companies pay.

The House passed a budget that includes a provision to fund a voucher/tax credit scheme to divert funding from public schools to private and religious schools.

The Senate considered legislation to allow fracking in North Carolina despite many unanswered questions about its environmental impact and how it could affect local communities. Republican legislative leaders promise that they will put strict regulations on any fracking they allow, but they make no secret about their hatred of government regulations. Last session they deeply slashed funding for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources that would regulate fracking in the state.

The House continued its war on women by again voting for a budget provision to defund Planned Parenthood’s important family planning programs.

The Senate approved legislation that would give every school in North Carolina a single misleading letter grade for their performance, regardless of the percentage of low-income students who attend the school or how much their scores increase from year to year.

The House voted to use money from the national settlement with mortgage services companies to pay for a crime lab building and restore other budget cuts instead of help people who were wronged by the mortgage industry.

Senate President Tem Phil Berger said the Senate isn’t interested in redistricting reform this session. The House passed legislation last year to turn to allow nonpartisan experts to draw the new district plans beginning in 2021. Berger has sponsored legislation to set up an independent redistricting commission in the past but now that he is in power he has apparently changed his mind.

The House voted to abolish all remaining funding for the state’s highly successful drug treatment courts that save taxpayer money and give drug offenders a chance to turn their lives around while undergoing extensive treatment, paying taxes, and supporting their families.

The House gave initial approval to legislation that allows live casino gambling in North Carolina for the first time in exchange for a portion of the revenues for education. It comes seven years after the state approved the predatory state lottery that makes education funding levels dependent on how many people the state can convince to buy a lottery ticket.

Senator Thom Goolsby introduced legislation that would allow people to carry a loaded handgun on “educational property that doubles as a place of worship during the regularly scheduled hours of worship, unless those hours coincide with the school’s operating hours.” If there’s one thing we need in North Carolina, it is loaded guns at church and on church school property. Last year lawmakers voted to allow guns in parks and playgrounds and the House voted to allow guns in restaurants and bars. Now Goolsby wants them in churches.

And remember all this happened just this week, a short holiday week at that. The radical, out-of control General Assembly rolls on.